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Statement submitted by Family Care International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.9/2011/1.

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Statement*

1. More than 350,000 women die in pregnancy and childbirth every year, from causes that are almost always preventable or treatable, such as haemorrhaging, infection, high blood pressure, obstructed labour, or unsafe abortion. The United Nations Secretary-General has brought together member states, NGOs, and other partners in a joint effort to confront this urgent challenge and end these needless deaths. The Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health recognizes that investing in the health of women and children builds stable, peaceful, and productive societies; reduces poverty; stimulates economic growth; is cost-effective; and helps women and children realize their fundamental human rights.

2. Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5, to improve maternal health and achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015, is the farthest off track of all the MDGs. In order to achieve the ultimate goal of the MDGs — to promote sustainable development — sexual and reproductive health and rights must be recognized and prioritized. In order to accelerate progress towards achieving MDG 5 and all of the MDGs, governments must commit to providing universal access to high-quality reproductive health services, including maternity care (antenatal care, skilled attendance at delivery, emergency obstetric services, and post-natal care), family planning, safe abortion, diagnosis and treatment of STIs including HIV, and comprehensive sexuality education.

3. Women are key drivers of development. Expanded access to family planning, to meet the unmet need of 200 million women worldwide, empowers women to control their own fertility; reduces their risk of death from pregnancy and childbirth complications; affords them access to educational and economic opportunity; and enables them to be productive contributors to their families, communities, and economies. Gender inequality (MDG 3) and poverty (MDG 1) contribute disproportionately to maternal mortality and morbidity, and must also be addressed in order to meet MDG 5. Young women are particularly vulnerable to gender inequalities and poverty; early marriage and childbearing entail risks of morbidities including obstetric fistula, and contribute to making pregnancy-related factors, including unsafe abortion, the leading cause of death for girls under the age of 19 in the developing world. If young people are to play their rightful and necessary role in achieving the MDGs and contributing to development of the world they will inherit, the legal and social barriers that prevent or limit their access to reproductive health information, services, and supplies must be addressed and removed.

4. Strong, well-functioning health systems are critically important for saving women's lives, and specifically for improving maternal health; reducing maternal mortality, unwanted pregnancy, and unsafe abortion; improving neonatal survival; and preventing STIs, including HIV/AIDS. Health systems must provide, on a priority basis, equitable access to sexual, reproductive, and maternal health services, including family planning, safe abortion, pregnancy-related services, skilled attendance at delivery, emergency obstetric care, and screening and treatment for STIs including HIV, and must give particular attention to the needs of and special risks faced by young people.

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

5. In order to meet the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action and achieve the MDGs, governments must protect and promote the human rights of women and girls, including their sexual and reproductive rights; empower women to control their fertility; ensure universal access to reproductive health; and continue efforts to improve maternal health and prevent the needless deaths of hundreds of thousands of women each year from complications of pregnancy and childbirth.

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